

THE RELATIVE GROWTH OF THE EUROPEAN GREAT POWERS.

(From the Economist.)
A short time ago it was asserted prominently in a leading article in the Times, that "relatively to other nations, England is the least strong, and Italy is the strongest." It was a very curious statement, and it was very curious to find it in the Times. The changes in the relative positions of the population of the chief European States since those days have, in truth, been of such magnitude, and it would not be possible to understand the politics of modern Europe without a clear conception of them.

It is not easy to conceive at first, with the knowledge of our present numbers, though we are still very young, that the English people, at the beginning of the present century, and how great relatively were their numbers. The figures before the present century are not very good, but at the outbreak of the great war—say in the year 1790—the population of Great Britain was estimated at something like ten millions, but for France the estimate was over 26,000,000. Such was the disparity between us and our antagonist, when we entered on that contest. Even if we include Ireland, our numbers were still only about 14,000,000, or little more than half the French total; but Ireland, added to the English, was not included in such a comparison as being, from its position, a disaffected, a drain upon the resources of Great Britain rather than an addition to them. Now the population of Great Britain may be put at 27½ millions, against 36 millions in France, and if we include Ireland, which is now much less of a weight than it was for many years after 1790, we are at present 32½ millions, against 36 millions in France. That is to say, France is now only a half of a third of the numbers of England. The State almost equal in point of numbers. If the growth of resources has been at all in proportion, England, the change in the relative forces of the countries is immense, and may give us some notion of what the relative power of England must now be towards any State of the numbers which France possessed during the great war.

But this is not the only revolution which has occurred; and if we take the figures just at the close of the great war, those of other countries being for that period more reliable, we shall have a better idea of the great transformation which this century has witnessed. The great Powers of Europe were then and are now, as follows:

Great Britain thus contained at the end of the great war about 9 per cent. of the population of the *Towers* which entered into the contest, and at present the disproportion is still more marked. The difference indeed. Though still the smallest in numbers also, the disparity between it and any other *State* is much less. It was then less than half any other *State*, and now it is less than one-third. It might not, strictly speaking, to be reckoned as a great Power at all at that time in consequence of its *alliance*; now the population of Great Britain is about equal to that of France, Germany, and Austria, and more than one-third of Russia in Europe, whereas, in 1811, it was less than a fourth of that immense State. The *increase* of Great Britain is not so great as that of France and Austria, and less than half that of Russia; whereas, even in its divided state, it was more than half of the population of France and Austria, and more than half that of Russia. And the transformation which has occurred becomes still more striking if we take into account the fact that *Europe* is now divided into three great Powers, France, Germany, and Austria, the Low Countries, Italy north of Rome, and part of Switzerland, making it an empire of 15,000,000 inhabitants, as against a divided Germany of 30,000,000, and Great Britain with a polity 12,000,000 inhabitants; the United Kingdom at the latter date including Ireland, still containing only about a third

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Adjutant 1st Regiment V.R.

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